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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

The role played by a character in any play defines his or her traits. These roles depend on the themes that the writer wants to discuss throughout the play. The writer could talk about love and compassion, greed and injustice. The theme of the play brings out the main traits of character revealed within the play. A positive theme shows positive traits whereas a negative theme highlights negative ones. Different styles become necessary to help represent better the traits designed for the plays. This essay compares and contrasts the characters of Gatsby and Jean Valjean in the Les Miserable novels and films.

Gatsby was a young man whose life got transformed from poverty to riches. He grew up under sheer impoverished circumstances as a young boy but became extremely wealthy. He should be about thirty years old and full of life. Raised from a struggling family, Gatsby desired riches and hated the miserable life his family lived. He became obsessed with seeking shortcuts or a quick way to gain some fortune and wealth. He was eager to get power that came with being wealthy. He hated processes and procedures. He could not keep up at school because he did not see how the school curriculum could get him out of poverty.

He dropped out of school barely two weeks after admission because of dissatisfaction with the duties assigned to him at school – janitorial duties. He could not bear the shame of the assigned duties. This was also his only way of paying his school fees. Stopping to do the chores meant that he

would have to leave school. That is what he did by expelling himself (Fitzgerald, 2008).

Left with no other choice, Gatsby resorted to criminal living. He formed a gang engaging in several organized criminal activities including the sale of illegal brews (alcohol) and stolen securities. The decision by Gatsby to live such a life came as a need to be loved by a lady Daisy Buchanan. The obsession for riches and wealth got fueled by the desire to have this woman as his wife. He wanted to make a great impression on this lady with his wealth and would not give up until he acquired everything he wanted.

The lady Daisy was from a rich family with an elegant background. Gatsby lied about his own background in order to prove that he is worth this lady. The writer of the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, deliberately delays the information about Gatsby's obsession with lady Daisy until the end of the novel. He presents him rather as a flamboyant man who loved to throw opulent parties at his luxurious mansion. He paints him living a luxurious life surrounded by powerful men and gorgeous women (Bloom, 2010). Jean Valjean is a central character in *Les Misérables* who became the main figure of love and compassion as highlighted in the Gugo's trials. He was a criminal whose life got transformed by the deplorable conditions and experiences acquired at the prison. He went into the prison naive and emerged as a hardened criminal with immense hatred for the church and society.

He did not care about respect and greeted even the bishop with much contempt and hatred. His meeting with Myriel Digne changed his life. He was forced to make a promise to become honest in all his undertakings. The once

hardened and desperate criminal was influenced by love and yielded to its redemptive power and compassion.

His diligence helped him to become a symbol of change within his hometown. Jean Valjean ended up as a philanthropic wealthy man (Hugo, 2006).

Discussion

The stories of the dominant Gatsby and Jean Valjean show some similarities concerning their characters. Both of them have lived criminal lives even though fueled by different passions.

They are both conquered by love. Gatsby and Valjean end up wealthy and powerful. On the contrary, the two characters differ in their personality and strength. Gatsby strikes the readers as a naive and lovesick individual though his character is negative. His desperation is clear. He is a cheat who tells lies about his background. He is selfish. He only thinks of himself and what he wants as opposed to what can benefit the others.

When conquered by love, Gatsby resorts to criminal activities to sustain it. On the other hand, we see Valjean who is physically strong and hardworking. He is an honest man who keeps his word (promises).

His life is transformed by love and compassion. He becomes visionary and philanthropic. Gatsby spends his money and wealth only on himself. He is evil and lacks a vision. Valjean is a symbol of hope.

The factual changes that occur in the life of Valjean prove that anyone can experience a better life after a negative experience. Gatsby is a symbol of evil and discontentment. He is constantly in pursuit of what he lacks for. He is not willing to discover and do what is right while Valjean seeks to do what is right.

Conclusion

Gatsby and Valjean have similarities and differences. Valjean's life changes for the better in the face of love unlike that of Gatsby.

Their stories highlight the fact that these individuals are unique and different.

Works Cited

Bloom, Harold. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010. Web. 13 December, 2011.